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ABSTRACT

The implementation of a set of curriculum standards in Scottish public schools has raised some fears among Scottish teachers of English over whether such strict guidelines will impede the use of literary education to foster students' personal growth. Previously, freed from many curricular restrictions by a series of reforms in the 1960s and 1970s, instructors of English in Scotland saw their role as facilitators of personal growth and creative interaction through literature. The notion of public accountability in the form of curriculum standards and a nationwide exam in the students' final year of school raised concerns that such personal growth would be replaced by mere basic skills instruction and approved-text edification. However, the new curriculum standards, compiled in a handbook called "Scottish Certificate of Education; Standard Grade: Arrangements in English at Foundation, General, and Credit Levels," have been swiftly and completely implemented in Scotland's 450 schools, due to the size of the country; its 12 small, tightly knit educational districts; and a team of administrators and teachers that can be called together to take part in curriculum development. Additionally, teachers have found ways to compromise between rigid standards and personal growth, developing classroom techniques that blend the two objectives. The success of the project suggests that a reconciliation between the liberties of personal growth and the strictures of "public accountability" is possible. (JC)

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ENGLISH - PERSONAL GROWTH AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY:- THE SCOTTISH EXPERIENCE

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ENGLISH - PERSONAL GROWTH AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY:- THE SCOTTISH EXPERIENCE

Scotland is a small country - but what has recently been happening to its English teaching is of widespread significance and of international interest. A statement which, I suspect, may be read as the kind of compensatory self-aggrandisement that those of us who dwell on the Celtic fringe of things are always liable to make. Perhaps some justification for it may, however, be found in the vividly representative nature of its recent educational experience. Since the late 1970's, Scotland has, within the United Kingdom, acted as the object of a government-led campaign of secondary school curricular reform heralded by the call for socially useful activity and public accountability which, I suspect, to-day challenges English teachers elsewhere but which, in such a small and centralized country, has already been able to act upon our subject with consequences for its identity and good practice that can be seen with particular clarity.

Along with their colleagues in other key secondary schools areas (maths and science), all English teachers in Scotland have, over the last two years, become required to defer to a centrally produced description of subject aims and objectives, to align their work with nationally agreed guidelines and to prepare each one of their pupils for a universal 'Standard' certificate. The award of this certificate, which is to be taken at the end of the final year of compulsory schooling - that is at the age of 16 - will be based upon lists of performance criteria along a 7-point scale, each level of which is illustrated by official exemplars of Standard pupil achievement. Individual teacher submission to the scheme has been encouraged by an intensive programme of in-service and secured by a system of school syllabus moderation.

Although its implementation has been temporarily held up by the current industrial action of teachers who are, I suspect, reacting not only to many years of depressed salaries but also to the increased work-loads and sharpened disciplines now to be imposed upon them, the principle of the new Standard Syllabus has achieved a remarkably swift and complete entry into all the 450 secondary schools of the land. This successful penetration has been facilitated by the size of a country in which a tightly-knit educational structure comfortably commands the twelve regions into which it is divided, a team of administrative units that can be comprehensively serviced by an intimate network of local Directors of Education, of Subject Advisers, College of Education Staff and specially appointed 'Curriculum Development Officers' - in all a body of local workers capable of being summoned together by the Government's Inspectors of Education (the 'HMIs') to take part in a concerted curricular exercise that has, likewise, been well placed to seek out and to recruit into its ranks many of the most influential Principal Teachers of the subject in the schools themselves.

Small Scotland then, is able to give to the world at large a clear and early example of what can happen to its English teaching when central Authority, prompted by 'wider' socio-economic considerations, decides to exert its executive rights over its individual schoolteachers.

I have put the matter in these terms so as to underline the larger significance of what has been happening to Scottish English teaching. The kind of general forces - the raising of the school leaving age, the decline of old-established industries and the traditional skills demanded by them, the acute problem of youth unemployment, the rapid spread of micro-technology, an

everpresent public anxiety over literacy standards, the shift towards more authoritarian conservative government and the apparent failure of liberalism to clinch the post-war utopia - that have impelled curricular change in my country are not confined to it. What, for instance, has already been occurring in Scotland is now serving as a model for parallel developments elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The recent Department of Education and Science in England and Wales publication English 5 -16[1] is a document that bears a strong character and strategy likeness to the earlier Scottish 'Guidelines' and 'Arrangements'[2], while the covering announcement from the Government minister Sir Keith Joseph ('nationally agreed objectives'....'a raising of standards')[3] testifies to a similar centralist urge to position English in the context of current political imperatives.

The impress of external authority that is now being felt by English teachers in the United Kingdom makes a comparison with the period that preceded these present impositions an especially poignant one. English teachers in Scotland in the 1960's, for instance, also got caught up in a nationwide movement of curricular renewal, but one in which they found encouragement to open up their subject to the kind of 'progressive' pupil-centred enthusiasms which were then becoming the dominant ideological force in the English-teaching world and which achieved a famous international recognition at Dartmouth, USA, in 1966. Then the move was towards the loosening of existing syllabus rigidities: the Scottish Examination Board gave a lead by clearing its papers of prescribed literary texts and impersonal language questions, while the official procedures used to stimulate change were correspondingly liberal and teacher-supportive - the convening of

a central committee of subject practitioners to advise the Secretary of State, the setting up of a national centre of information in Edinburgh for English teachers, the local authorities' appointment of new subject advisers and the shift in function of the Inspectorate towards an advisory role, being the leading innovations here.

Reform, in other words, was then allowed to spring up from within the subject itself, was an impulse to be sustained by the free energies of its teachers and the liberty they were given to base their work on the most forward looking thinking within it. This led to the shared possession of a view of English which saw its essence as being in a creative interaction between the pupils' own language and the vital, imaginative usages to be found in the personal experiencing of literature. The result was that by the end of that decade there had been established in Scotland a philosophy of English to which all its teachers could give broad assent and in which they could see for themselves a constructive role - and one against which the new English that is emerging from the current reforms must be judged. And just as the English of the 1960's and 70's, the English of personal 'Growth', was able to sweep through the whole of Scotland, so this small country can now provide a sharply illuminated stage on which to observe the enactment of what now threatens, in the United Kingdom and possibly elsewhere, to be the English of the 1980's and 90's.

So what is likely to happen to English, 'our' English, when after an era of autonomous progressive development it becomes subject to the regimen of public 'accountability'? The immediate fear is, of course, that a subject thus placed under the government monitorship of national checklists and periodic pupil testing will regress into a narrow utilitarian business of

basic skills and literature as approved-text edification. For those teachers who feel that the wave of progressive reform initiated in the Growth years of a generation ago is now about to wash up on a very rocky shore indeed, the evidence of the recent Scottish experience is not entirely lacking in reassuring features. The development strategy that has informed its introduction does show that central control can be exercised with a liberal regard for the working out of a balanced syllabus resolution to the competing claims of subject and 'society'. Unfortunately, I believe that further scrutiny of the way the resulting compromise is going to work in practice will show that the attempted consensus is all too likely to break down beneath an inner contradiction of form and content that will undermine the good intentions of those who are striving to preserve the freedom of Growth within the new framework. Even here, however, any resulting sense of disquiet need not be overwhelming since the episode as a whole has the power to show us the weaknesses within our preferred English ideologies and in a way that will perhaps enable us to work towards their remedy. Both in the content of its change and the manner in which it has been worked, the new Scottish Standard Grade Syllabus can - once more - act as a useful case-study for those other parts of the world in which English teachers will be similarly obliged to negotiate a publicly accountable revision of their subject.

Considered as an exercise in curriculum reform, the careful, even sensitive manner with which the Standard Grade courses have been introduced has much to commend it. When in the late 1970's the Secretary of State for Scotland accepted the findings of the commission of enquiry (The 'Munn' and 'Dunning' Reports[5]) set up to investigate the content and assessment of the syllabus in 14 to 16

year age range that there should be devised new assessable courses appropriate for the whole age-range, (a proposal that had its origins in the way in which the recent raising of the school leaving age had highlighted the unsuitability of the existing 'Certificate' courses for the majority of the secondary school population), he gave the education system several years in which to work out its detailed syllabus response. Thus the Inspectors of Schools who were entrusted with the task of formulating the new English course were able to treat it as a long-term developmental enterprise to be carried out in a partnership with selected teachers on an ever-widening 'Pilot' school basis, and initially as a provisional feasability-study of low-key observation and consultation. To begin with, the work was confined to the lowest 40% of pupils whose ability and interests debarred them from the existing O'Grade course thus allowing concentration on what was widely agreed to be a priority area. In both these ways, the eventual 'Guidelines' and 'Arrangements' when final drafts were published and 'recommended' for universal acceptance in 1983, could be held to be based on study of actual, and much needed, 'good practice' and could also enjoy the support of a vanguard body of practising English teachers who had naturally developed a strong sense of allegiance to a cause in which they had been given such prominent paths to play.

The 'Standard Grade' experience does show that it is possible to work out mandatory subject guidelines in a thoughtful, assent-commanding way by treating the matter as a gradualist, school-based movement in which individual teachers are allowed a pioneering role. Cause, as I earlier indicated, for reassurance. However, even at this stage, as I also warned, a matter for possible disquiet, for this is a pattern of affairs that could be

judged as an exercise in soft coercion. To those who are instinctively distrustful of the whole notion of nationally imposed syllabus requirements, the very care with which the Scottish programme has been unfolded may be evidence of the insidious way in which 'authority' can disarm resistance by only gradually widening the base of its operation, all the time sucking in the loyalties of an evergrowing number of the conveniently scattered individual 'Pilot' teachers who find themselves increasingly committed to its work.

It is true - and possibly sinisterly so - that the concerted NATE-wide criticism accorded to the recent and abruptly unilateral declaration of objectives represented by English 5 - 16 has not been preceded by anything more than localised grumbles from Scottish teachers over their 'Guidelines' and 'Arrangements'. But this could also be because English teachers north of the Border have had the opportunity to see how the new syllabus proposals can work in practice and have been reassured by the evidence. It is, in any case, fruitless - and unfair - to pursue a sifting out of the possible ambiguities of intention in those whose responsibility it has been to mediate between the wider social interests represented by Government departments and the individual interpretations of subject held by specialist teachers in the schools. The real point is the quality of the product itself rather than the manner of its marketing. If national guidelines do manage to contain a provision for an English that continues to be informed by the ideas of individual Growth then all its prescriptions and all its measurements will serve both to confirm the identity of the subject and to offer a means by which to ensure that it is taught to all pupils of whatever ability.

An argument that brings us to the content of Standard Grade English as described in the Scottish Education Department 'Arrangements'. In this document we can clearly see the way in which the demand for a description of English in terms of publicly accountable teaching targets has led its HMI authors into the adoption of a syllabus design driven by a reductive aims-to-objectives analysis. Accordingly, they quickly move from an unexceptionable invocation of general aims - 'growth', 'competence', 'enrichment' through, in and by language - to detailed lists of activities based on a dividing up of 'linguistic' behaviour into the four modes of talking, listening, reading, writing which are then broken down into sets of specific purposes-for-which-we-use language such as 'stating a point of view', or 'communicating a personal experience'. In this way they arrive at precise specifications of teaching objectives since these 'purposes' once identified may now be broken down into sets of component skills - so that, for example, 'talk' competence may become 'conveying information to an audience', mastery of which can be shown to depend on a demonstration of 'organisation' of content and manner of 'delivery' sufficiently 'intelligible' and 'clear' to achieve this informative purpose. Assessment may be calculated by setting individual effectiveness in these tasks against lists of the criteria derived from the required skills; differentiation into grades is worked by arranging such criteria along a 7-point scale of comparative achievement as illustrated by exemplars of Standard pupil performance at each level.

All this makes for a logical flowline account of the 'business' of the English syllabus - but one in which the publicly necessary rationalisation of activity has been accomplished by turning to a very different tradition of

English teaching and learning from the one that post-war British teachers, at least, have grown up in. Their ideals of 'Growth' have assumed a pattern of learning which is essentially personal in nature; values such as 'responsiveness', 'creativity' and 'awareness' are inherently unspecifiable in overt instructional terms, both by reason of their fluid, open-ended character and their attachment to an individuality of experience. Moreover, they would argue that is a wholeness of experience that is to be nurtured, the living integrity of which cannot be accounted for by any subcategorisation into so-called 'modes and 'purposes' nor evaluated through the instrument of targeted criteria. Glanced at from this viewpoint the Arrangements might appear to have landed among Scottish teachers from an alien world of systems analysis and mastery instructionalism, an approach which instinctively is felt as not only destructive of the true spirit of English teaching but, most fatally in British eyes, is associated with the false certainties of American behaviourism and cognitive psychology.

Such instinctive dismissal is, however, unfair, for the Arrangements represent a genuine attempt to use aims-and-objectives planning in order to recommend a completely rounded version of the subject, sufficiently so to satisfy all viewpoints. Its opening paragraph grandly defines the ideals of English teaching to be both Competence and Growth, thus proposing a duality of aim out of which can be deduced a necessity for the treatment of personal and literary usages of language as well as socially useful skills. Similarly, its advocacy of the balanced, inclusive syllabus not only guarantees a place for literature but also opens the way for a welcome broadening of activity to include talk and listening - and not just as telephone skills and

following oral instruction (Competence) but as the expression of personal experience and enjoyment of dramatic effect (Growth).

The analytical operation is made to serve liberal intention in other ways as well: its definition of syllabus activity as broad language purposes, rather than specific items, gives individual teachers the freedom to make their own selection of materials and topics; the notion of language as a set of outcomes derived from attempts to fulfil purposes means that assessment may be built into the learning sequences of the course so opening the way to continuous rather than external assessment. Further encouragement towards an experiential learning approach can be found in the recommendation that work be organized into a series of 'units', topic-based clusters of language and literature activity in which work on particular skills may be generated by pupil investigation of an issue such as 'Love and Marriage' or the 'World of Work'. And uniting all the different categories of language competences that make up the Arrangements' 'objectives' is their description of them as 'purposes', an approach that promises to turn their mastery into a personal endeavour by thus rooting skill acquisition in individual usage - in the impulse of the pupil to express his needs and to make an effectively personal response to the articulations of others.

It is by means such as these that the current Scottish development attempts to put together a new synthesis in which, notionally at least, language and literature, skills and personal development may be shown to be joined together in the one purposeful syllabus enterprise. Commendably liberal of course - but is it really possible to convert personal experience into aims-and-objectives and by so doing humanise the whole operation?

What, in making such an attempt will be the teaching result? Will personal Growth become diminished into a set of predictable externalities or, instead, receive a new sharpness of purpose that will enable the pupil to participate more comprehendingly in pursuit?

These are the Key questions that can only be answered by a look at the actual quality of learning experience offered to the individual pupil by a classroom realisation of the Arrangements' good intentions. As the Standard Grade course is still in its infancy it is impossible to be certain in this matter. However, amidst much of the excellent work that has been going on there are, I believe, examples of emerging practice that indicate that the attempt to put humane practice into a framework of accountability will produce a compromise that falls decisively in favour of the latter. A clear instance of the devitalising effect that appears to result, when English teaching finds itself having to think in terms of 'objectives' and 'criteria', is to be witnessed in the early attempts to respond to the inclusion of 'listening' in the formal course requirements. Now potentially this is an exciting development, to be greeted as an overdue extension of the Growth principle to a recognition of the vital part that listening plays in our individual lives. Pioneering syllabus territory to be opened up by fresh approaches informed by a vision of what the individual pupil-as-listener ought to become, a person who, helped by his school experiences in aural work, ought to be all the more able to make a sensitive, personal response to the words and messages of others.

Well, perhaps, but in the event 'listening' has usually become an occasion for unadventurous dictée-style 'comprehension'

testing in which teacher reads a printed extract on to a tape which, when played, can then unload on to the pupils' attention a cargo of factual baggage that yields the what-when-how many questions so handy for the required assessment purposes - a regimen that leaves the pupil with an awareness of 'Listening' as an item on the timetable rather than as a human process, as a technical routine of memory recall, test-questioning and language as quantifiable data - and English as a passive learning for grades.

It could be argued that this is an early and recidivist response to a new and tricky curriculum demand where the appropriate methodological and assessment procedures have yet to be worked out. However, it is also an approach that with only a few modifications to the nature of the message - the attempt to use 'real' radio material for example - and none at all to the questioning style has been sanctioned by the official exemplars produced by the Examination Board. And this for the reason that it, like the individual teacher, has quickly found itself imprisoned in the confines of learning objectives and all-round accountability.

Now you could - given a freedom that the Arrangements cannot really afford us to treat listening as a part of total language experience - do some stimulating classroom work with aural material, whether taped, caught on the radio or simply delivered by live voice. You could, for instance, offer pupils a range of topic-related materials thus prompting them to discover how they might join their listening to their reading, viewing, and discussion as their exploration of living issues, their consideration of the various focuses of human experiences. This is a general approach which would naturally lead to an experiential treatment in which pupils would be asked to make use

of their listening, to show judgment and to allow a free play to their responsiveness by setting the message in the context of their own experience; to match it for themselves against a perception of their own 'listener' needs and to work out their own strategies for handling auditory material - in short to ask their own questions of their own listening. Appropriate responses could be made in the form of interview, by the writing of a report or the drawing of a diagram, by a dramatisation or a piece of creative simulation; a discussion, a poem, a comparison with a story or newspaper article may then be the outcome.

But, and here is the behaviourist catch, if the pupils were to choose to do all that, then how would we know that they had been 'listening'? The Examination Board exemplars have found that they are forced to fragment the holistic listening response down into twenty separate questions; this is done not merely to facilitate computation - although that is always handy, of course - but rather to attain assessment access to the so-called 'Skills' that must make up the act. This is an inescapable consequence of the obligation to treat a language process as a precisely definable set of objectives: that can only be accomplished by breaking the matter down into accumulations of cognitive procedures, to be arranged as a respectably scientific comprehension taxonomy of - in the Arrangements, Section 3, Paragraph 5 - 6 main behaviours such as the ability 'to obtain particular information 'from a message or to demonstrate 'appreciation of the techniques' used in its composition - and then to ask questions on each.

To appreciate how difficult it is to sustain genuine personal involvement within the necessarily linear programming of the aims-and-objectives syllabus, we need only look at what happens to the Arrangements' notion of 'purposes'. This, as I earlier noted, is a dynamic idea potentially capable of investing language categorisation with a sense of individual engagement. In the event, however, what is offered us is the tight listing of the six main 'purposes' already referred to, in a way that is quite misleading as a description of what actually happens when we do try to make an appropriate response to what someone else has to say to us. Then I would very much doubt whether we ever do listen in order to pay prescribed attention to one particular aspect of the 'message' either singly or as a contribution to a cumulative sequence. To offer the kind of skills taxonomy that we see tabled in syllabus designs of this sort as our instructional objectives, as if they really did constitute a definitive account of real processes of listening, is to visit analytical simplifications upon complex realities; to propose a teaching pattern that is based on drawing up sets of specific purposes-related items based on such arbitrary abstractions is surely to compound the error. If we do have purposes in listening - and the idea of informing our teaching by a sense of purposefulness remains a valuable one - then I would suggest that these are to be discovered, and preferably by teacher and pupil together, through a consideration of what the 'listener' encountering this 'message' in such-and-such a context really needs to do with it, in order to get what he wants out of it. The result might be a range of flexible focus points that could be seen as broad functions such as 'deciding who is right or wrong in an argument', or 'working out what these characters in this story are really feeling' - but then these would take us into those areas of open enquiry and

individuality of response that standardised 'objectives' find so hard to chart.

What I am arguing here is that an accountability-through-objectives design for English teaching is, however liberally we sprinkle it with human colouring, almost bound to act as a closed system which is quite incapable of responding to the flexibility and the richness of the living language. And this devitalisation is not, note, merely a matter of style. As I have tried to show through its treatment of listening, the new Scottish syllabus traps itself in a curriculum model which, because of its inherent character as an objectives-seeking mechanisation, will impose upon those obliged to work it an analytical imperative that will subvert any individual teachers' liberal intention.

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I have offered this partial account of the new Scottish Standard Grade and its central document the Arrangements as an example of one country's attempts to come to terms with a wider contemporary demand for a definition of the English Syllabus to be based upon a public perception of useful skills and relevant activity. The issue that emerges is this: if the instance of the national syllabus's initial treatment of a potentially rich innovation such as listening can so quickly reveal a not-so-hidden curriculum of fixed behaviourism, then should we subject specialists - in Scotland and elsewhere - resist the whole notion of accountability and plead for a restoration of English teacher freedom? // Now if that question sounds a little unreal then it is meant to: once the claim for a declaration of clearly articulated intention has been given the kind of loud utterance that it has recently received in the United Kingdom, then it will quite properly become part of a consumer expectation that the individual teacher will feel himself obliged to satisfy. If we wish to sustain the kind of English that

we feel draws upon the best traditions of our subject then we shall have to argue the case as part of a negotiation for a public description of what we are doing and in a way that will meet the wider concerns that have prompted it.

Successful pleading will be partly a matter of reformulating out intentions, of being able to offer assurance that our ideological preference for personal growth is broad enough and robust enough to include within it a thoroughgoing commitment to pupil competence in dealing with all the circumstances of his life. Indeed a clearly worked out definition of 'competence' could act as an enrichment of our awareness of what determines 'growth' and thus give new vigour and completeness to what is otherwise liable to be seen as a somewhat preciously romantic metaphor for the human and cultural values we attach to the development of individual command over the native language. The Arrangements' list of language categories, if refined, could be read as a checklist of considerations and pointers, and not as a programme of separable items; would then be said to represent a generous enabling philosophy of English teaching because 'Competence' could thus be seen as concomitant with 'Growth' and not as an alternate aim to be placed alongside it.

We must be prepared to argue - but we must also be able to demonstrate by the work our pupils accomplish within a shared community of human needs and experiences, that 'competence', true competence is too vital and too individual a matter to be met through a crude tinkering with simulated linguistic purposes and a trivialising division into separate little tasks when compared to the urgent, complex demands of real language usage among real people. We should be ready to show that it makes no useful sense to say that - to pursue my example - someone is good

at 'listening' for 'particular' information but is presently below par in his ability to pick up 'oral inference', that these are skills that one can be graded 1 to 7 in. That, indeed, the possession of a competence in 'listening' by itself is of little point when in an actuality that is multi-dimensional we can only become effective participants by exploring and making united use of all our language capacities. Listening - or any other of the so-called modes - is part of a personal resource that we draw upon as best we may and in ways that are determined by an individual perception of situation, needs, capability. Set against this reality, the kind of aims-and-objectives language activity that I have earlier described, would be dismissed as inadequate, rendered so by its inability to nurture in the pupil that independence of verbal command that will offer him some control over the circumstances of his own life.

What instead we must do is to satisfy the call for competence with the employment of other approaches in which, perhaps, the Scottish Arrangements valuable recommendation for teaching through topic-related units could be exploited so as to involve the pupil in many-sided assignments - he could, for example, be given a situation to investigate or an issue to explore, the presentation to him of which could be through a variety of genres: articles, press cuttings, poems, videoed scenes, photograph, radio interviews, novel extracts and autobiographical memory, the opportunity for real-live interviews and location work; and the pupils' response, correspondingly diverse, would thus have the public value of demonstrating the growing maturity and effectiveness of his language.

'To employ other approaches' - the phrase is easily slipped in and the accompanying example is evoked with a fluency that I think exposes the problem English teachers have in persuading a wider

acceptance of our notions of 'growth' through English. Its weakness lies not in the philosophy, which is surely humane and inclusive enough to account for any 'skills', 'competences' or any other desired facet of individual experience. It lies in a failure to develop the classroom methodology by which to give substance to our claims. One of the easy attractions of the aims-and-objectives curriculum is that it does promise method, does offer us an instantly available pedagogy of step by step training which will follow quite logically from an analysis of the subject into clearly defined targets. In contrast, a tradition in which personal self-realisation is - somehow - the aim can admit of no such prescription but must instead rest on a set of intentions such as 'engagement', 'sensitivity' and 'creativeness' that can really constitute only a declaration of aspirations rather than a firm teaching programme.

Consequently, many of those who have been most persuasive in their plea for Growth, have kept their teaching exposition at the level of generalized 'approaches'. Here for instance are two of the leading British advocates, in statements that were written recently but in words that reach back into the 1960s: Peter Abbs in a comment on the current 'crisis' asks only for an English that promotes 'the productive use of imagination and free speculation - not knowing the outcome'; [6] David Holbrook defines the subject's goal as 'whole literacy', explaining that this 'develops by a mysterious process of exchange between teacher and child involving the child's overall growth as a person.' [7]

After twenty years of being fortified, stimulated, beguiled by such words, it becomes difficult not to feel that the rhetoric has become a substitute for methodology. For it is not only the hard headed functionalist who needs something more than this eloquence that so easily absolves itself from practical

results and which invokes a sense of mystery in its description of the teaching process. No doubt there will always be the gifted individual practitioner whose commitment to the cause can infuse a natural classroom presence of the kind that will enable him to progress towards the miracle of a thirty-fold personal development in his pupils, but for most teachers the secondary school world is too much with us. Time and again a cohort of young teacher students will issue forth from the Teachers' College where I work - I wish to be personal in order to own to a shared responsibility here - charged with the rightness of a shared ideal, only to find that the task of submitting the individual vision to the forty minute period, of mediating between the individual and the many, of overcoming the gap between their degree-cultivated awareness of what 'personal' language may do for the pupil and <u>his</u> sense of such a thing as being yet another species of school register, is too much. The result is a half indignant, half relieved retreat back towards the handed-down routines of institutionalized tasks and skills, of 'English' as a quietly executed series of interpretation passages, language exercises, dictated exposition.

If we are really serious about helping our new teachers to resist this kind of thing, whether in its new or a rearranged form, then we must work to clarify the classroom methods by which to realise our humane ideology. And the basis for such a pedagogy has, I believe, already been offered to us. This paper began with an historical perspective and, in showing where this answer might be, I should now like to conclude with one. I opened with a reference to the Scottish Standard Grade as an example of current change, which I suggested, was representative enough, at least in British terms, to stand as the English of the 1980s, a time when the free ideals of Growth so prominent in the 1960s, are being forced to

adjust themselves to the demands for a more explicit treatment of pupil development in the name of public accountability. Now these are claims that cannot, I have argued, be simply shouted down, not given the continued failure of Growth to define its classroom enablement in clear procedural terms. The task is to find the teaching methodology which will effect a practical reconciliation between the claims of the two eras. Where this is to be located is, I would suggest, in the developments of the 1970s.

That decade, in the United Kingdom, also witnessed a public preoccupation with 'Standards (The 'Great Debate' as the current British Premier James Callaghan dramatised it), a consequence of which was the setting up of a Government committee of enquiry into the national teaching of English. Its work was published as the 1975 'Bullock Report', a document that, on the whole, found itself to be sympathetic towards the English of development as an individualised experience. That it did so was largely because of the advocacy of witnesses and participants such as Douglas Barnes, John Dixon, Joan Tough, Harold Rosen and, pre-eminently, of James Britton; and this was not only because of the force of their persuasion but also because they were able to found their arguments for a personally experiential treatment of the subject on a credible scientific account of language growth in children, in which the work of psycholinguists such as Vygotsky and Chomsky could be used to point out the direction for a whole methodology of English teaching that might be based on encouraging natural developmental processes in the classroom - and through a 'Language Across the Curriculum' drive, in the school as a whole. The central argument that it was in the processes of his own language that the child carried the means to generate his learning, clearly suggested a syllabus in which, for example, 'engagement' would be given a practical realisation

through peer group discussion, personal 'creative' writing could be validated by reference to the exploratory processes of expressive writing and 'responsiveness' nurtured by open styles of teacher-pupil questioning.

In 1975 there seemed, therefore, every promise of the working out of a complete set of teaching techniques based on the setting up and the development of linguistic interaction between teacher, pupil, and subject, one that would give firm methodological expression to the values and the aspirations of the Growth syllabus.

The fact that the anniversary of the Bullock Report has been marked by the publication of English 5 - 16 and the attempted establishment of a Scottish Standard Grade in its present form shows that in Britain, at least, these hopes have yet to be fully realized. Why is it that when those responsible for the furtherance of United Kingdom English teaching have been called upon to own up to a public account of the subject have they found themselves reverting to an aims-and-objectives syllabus model whose limitedly instrumental practices will lead its practitioners away from their professed goal of individual development? Partly this must be because the task of working out a synthesis of method and aim sufficiently subtle yet clearly directed enough to achieve real mediation between the values of personal expressiveness and the world of public language forms is bound to be a long and sensitive labour. But it is also, I would speculate - and the impressions that now follow must have no higher status than that - because in my country, at least, many, and often the most eloquent, English teachers have continued to speak in the free accents of the 1960s; they have responded to the interactional thesis of language learning promoted by Bullock certainly, but as a confirmation of their ideological faith in Growth, rather than as an invitation to work

at the problems of teaching method implied by it. What ought to have been read as preliminary insight into the nature of the child's language development has become for them a vindication of the supremacy of his individuality of experience. The recommendation, for example, of the value of peer group talk as a hermeneutic process has often become the opportunity to celebrate the spontaneous energies released by teacher-free talk, while the exploratory function of expressive writing may be seen not as a stage in the child's movement towards control of form but as an aesthetic quality to be appreciated as evidence of his ability to produce richly textured work.

In both these and like instances the hard pedagogic issues raised by the need to ensure real progress can thus become subsumed in a romantic enthusiasm. This may be seen most strikingly in the way that the role of the teacher is often devalued in British writing on English so that his potential to direct and to structure the task, to set the formative problem, to provide analysis of the steps by which the pupil may organize his perceptions of what is required - in general to take up an appropriately teaching function in the interactional relationship - has been of less interest than the way in which the flow of his sympathies ought to be liberating the child to express what is naturally within him.

What, in short, has happened in these cases is that the language of Bullock has become absorbed into the philosophy of Growth and used as a means of renewing the faith rather than as a tool by which to discipline its assumptions and to articulate the methods by which its ideals may be realised. It certainly seems to me that most of the voices which have been most influential in United Kingdom English teaching over the last fifteen years have responded to the concept of language development through interaction more as the

means by which to advance a broad ideology and less as the stimulus to a working out of a detailed methodology. Here I am thinking not only of the columns of the major British periodicals 'English in Education' and 'The Use of English' but also of the prolific series of Schools Council publications impelled by the 1970s interest in Language in and across the Curriculum. In many respects this work has combined to carry an inspirational effect, recording as it does, time and again, the single teacher's success in making sensitive engagement with a pupil's growing expressiveness. Writers such as James Britton, Harold Rosen, Tony Burgess, Nancy Martin and Douglas Barnes have, collectively, offered us stirring testimony to the effective humanity with which the committed teacher may put himself or herself at the service of a pupil in the struggle to make new meaning out of personal language. And yet it is also significant that their work frequently reads as a dramatic revelation rather than as an exposition of classroom procedure, leaving English for Growth to remain an individual quest which will by the forces of its own autobiographical energies arrive at the discovery of the voice within the child.

In the end that of course, is the goal that renders all other so-called aims and objectives trivial and distracting. And yet its attainment could be more convincingly worked for in the ordinary classroom if the private authenticity of these experiences could be given a clearer and more accessible procedure basis, for otherwise they will remain the preserve of intuitive assumptions. If we are to satisfy the call for explicit criteria then we must be prepared to take into our precious tradition of growth through English - so magnificently enriched by those named above - the practical insights now being offered to us by those educationists who have been involved in research into the nature of the learning processes, especially

where such work has already addressed itself to language concerns. I am obviously thinking here of the brilliant illumination afforded by Jerome Bruner's work on the use of problem-solving situations in the syllabus so as to present the pupil with a series of creative challenges that will demand a personal engagement with new concepts, skills and task analysis. Similarly the work that has been done on children's writing in Ontario, the Nottingham-based findings on reading for learning, Australian experiments in defining and teaching oracy as well as the Edinburgh and Aberdeen projects on discussion skills and formative reading strategies in my own Scotland, are all examples of the kind of research that can suggest ways in which the English teacher may use formative learning experiences in his classroom so as to make possible for his pupils an explicit treatment of achievement criteria within a context of personal involvement.

This paper has been written from a British, specifically a Scottish viewpoint. It has been about how the recent syllabus developments in my country reveal how vulnerable our subject ideals are to the direct challenge to offer a clear account of the objective criteria on which they may be based. To that extent the experience I have tried to describe may be considered a representative one.

But this paper has also been about Scottish isolation since, as the names above suggest, scattered throughout the English-teaching world there already exist the elements out of which to achieve reconciliation between the liberties of 'personal growth' and the strictures of 'public accountability'. What is now needed, perhaps, is a coming together of the experiences of those who have been striving to assimilate the emerging insights into language development and learning processes into the living experience of

their daily classroom teaching. And that surely is a task important enough and large enough to challenge our best international endeavours.

FOOTNOTES

1. English from 5 to 16, Curriculum Matters 1, an HMI series, London 1984.

2. Syllabus and Assessment Guidelines: English, Foundation Level, Scottish Education Department, 1981.
Scottish Certificate of Education; Standard Grade: Arrangements in English at Foundation, General and Credit Levels, Scottish Examination Board, 1984.

3. Statement issues October 2, 1984.

4. re John Dixon, Growth Through English, Oxford University Press for National Association for the Teaching of English, 1967 (Report based on the Dartmouth Seminar 1966).

   The Scottish response was a series of 'Bulletins' on various topics of English teaching, issued by the Scottish Education Department between 1967 and 1972.

5. re Assessment for All: Report of the Committee to Review Assessment in the Third and Fourth Years of Secondary Education in Scotland, Scottish Education Department, 1977.

6. Peter Abbs, 'A Response to David Light', English: Education, Volume 17 No. 3.

7. David Holbrook, Times Educational Supplement, November 2, 1984

8. A Language For Life, Report of the Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock, HMSO, 1975.

9. Eileen Francis Learning to Discuss: Discussion Development Group, Speech Unit, Moray House, College of Education, Edinburgh, 1982.

   Ronald Fyfe and Evelyn Mitchell (Aberdeen College of Education), Reading Strategies and their Assessment, NFER Nelson, London 1985.